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DURHAM, N.H. -- The University of New Hampshire community will honor the lives of persons captured and enslaved during the Atlantic slave trade at a bicentennial commemoration event Monday, Oct. 20, 2008.

Organized by the UNH Center for New England Culture, the event will commemorate the bicentennial of the legal end of the African slave trade by the United States in 1808, and it will note those Africans who were transported to slavery in New Hampshire and struggled for their freedom. It is free and open to the public.

The commemoration will begin in UNH's Memorial Union Building at 3 p.m. with remarks by Funso Afolayan, professor of history, on the history and impact of the slave trade on Africa. The state of New Hampshire's acknowledgement of the commemoration will be marked by the reading of a letter from Gov. John Lynch. Participants will then walk at 3:45 p.m. to Durham Landing, a site where slaves worked during the Colonial era and within sight of the location of slave cabins on the property of Revolutionary War General Sullivan.

Valerie Cunningham, president of the Portsmouth Black Heritage Trail, will lead the reading of the names of New Hampshire's enslaved Africans who petitioned the New Hampshire legislature for their freedom in 1779. After other commemorative activities, the event will conclude with a homily by the Rev. Robert Thompson of Phillips Exeter Academy.

According to David Watters, director of the Center for New England Culture, New Hampshire's role in the African slave trade began in 1645. There were 70 slaves in New Hampshire by 1708, and at least 656 slaves by 1775. In the 1700s, many Portsmouth captains regularly transported slaves from Africa to the Caribbean and to the American colonies. In 1755, John Moffatt's ship, the *Exeter*, arrived in Portsmouth with 20 men, 17 boys, 17 women, and seven girls, and the slave population rapidly expanded in New Hampshire until the Revolution. Despite the legal end of the slave trade in 1808 as called for in the United States Constitution and confirmed by legislation enacted in 1807 to take effect on Jan. 1, 1808, an illegal slave trade continued until the start of the Civil War. The last recorded slave in New Hampshire was in the census of 1840.

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